

Pedagogical Tools for Having Anti-Bias Conversations

These are a few suggestions to encourage critical thinking when having sensitive discussions.



1 Four Corners

Place four signs around the room that read, “agree,” “strongly agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Pose critical thinking questions and have students stand by the sign that matches their opinion. Allow students to have conversations in their small groups about why they chose their “corner” and then open the conversations to the larger room. Allow students to change their minds and locations as the discussion progresses and they clarify their thinking.

2 Poetry Slam

Choose different quotes or ideas pertaining to a particular subject. Keep them to only one sentence. Print out the quotes/ideas and cut them into thin strips, keeping all the same quotes/ideas together. Print about 10-15 of each depending on the size of the class. Post one of the pieces and put the rest in an envelope below the statement. Allow each person to peruse and choose the quotes/ideas that speak to them most and take a strip of that quote/idea. Once they have all the statements that “speak to them,” have them glue them onto a piece of paper in the order that sounds most like a poem to them. Have the students then share their poems and explain why they chose those particular statements and ordered them in that way.

3 The Last Word

Have the students read a passage, poem or short article to themselves and write down one sentence that stands out to them. Form small groups and instruct one person to read their sentence aloud and then each person in the group tells them why they think the person chose that sentence. The reader of the sentence goes last, explaining why they chose that sentence.

4 Go Around

When and if things get a little tense, form a circle and have everyone either give a word or phrase about how they are feeling or respond to a prompt from the educator. This allows all voices in the room to be heard.